

One Year Ago in Figure Four Weekly (Issue 247) PLUS ordering info for tapes and newsletters by Bryan Alvarez

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One Year Ago in Figure Four Weekly
March 20, 2000

The entire face of professional wrestling on cable and network television may be about to change.

The following paragraph appeared in the WWF's Quarterly Report released last week: "USA Network Television Distribution Agreements — On March 1, 2000 we provided notice of cancellation of our contract with USA Network with respect to four hours of our programming effective September 2000. Our agreement with USA Network with respect to our remaining hour of programming expires in September 2000. We are currently in discussions with USA Network as well as other networks to secure a new distribution agreement for this programming."

The four hours of programming the WWF provided notice of cancellation for were Raw, Superstars and Live Wire. The "remaining hour of programming" which expires in September 2000 is Heat.

This statement does not mean WWF is definitely leaving the USA Network, although sources in the TV industry are already speculating that a jump to CBS is imminent. Sources in the WWF say negotiations with both CBS and USA are already underway. Apparently, talks with FOX fell through after the WWF made it clear that, in addition to WWF programming, they wanted clearance for XFL programming as well, and FOX wasn't hot on that idea.

If WWF were to jump to CBS, Smackdown would remain on the Viacom-owned UPN Network and Raw would likely make a jump to TNN. Television sources say CBS is willing to give TNN a new name and makeover built around WWF programming if the company is willing to part ways with USA. As far as cable viewership is concerned, USA is seen in approximately 77 million homes compared to TNN's 76 million.

The WWF/USA deal states that USA has the right of first refusal for the programming blocks, although an article in Variety notes that Viacom's "overwhelming interest, affiliation with broadcast network CBS, and bigger pocketbook may make that point moot."

USA Network obviously would love to keep its relationship with the WWF alive since it provides by far the highest-rated programming on the network. In hindsight, it is probably no coincidence that USA recently agreed to ban all advertisements for Beyond the Mat in order to keep Vince happy.

Unfortunately for USA, they are dealing with a huge media empire with a big pocketbook that would like nothing more than to acquire the highest-rated programming on cable. CBS is reportedly willing to offer \$100 million in equity, which would totally pay off the proposed start-up costs of the XFL. When word hit the street that a bidding war was likely to erupt over WWF programming, the WWFE stock rose to almost \$14 per share. The biggest single drop in the history of the stock came when the XFL announcement was officially made. If CBS bought into the WWF and made an investment that would essentially pay the start-up costs for the new league, it seems certain the stock would be in for another huge upward jump.

Another major factor to consider is the future of ECW should WWF sign a deal with CBS. If Raw moves to TNN, ECW's run on that network is over. As we noted last week, Paul Heyman is pretty much expecting this to happen which is why he has ingeniously booked the main storyline as ECW vs. TNN. However, USA might be interested in bringing ECW aboard if they feel it can do ratings even remotely comparable to what Raw once did. Obviously, ECW on USA won't debut at anywhere near a 5.0, but there are a lot of factors to consider in terms of future potential. Would an ECW show on USA on Monday nights do better than the current Friday night show on TNN? Almost definitely. ECW would be moving from an obscure cable network to a new home that fans have traditionally tuned in to for wrestling. In addition to that, USA would likely pump new money into the company to not only upgrade current production values, but also to hire new office staff and talent as well. On the downside, USA would probably be looking for a live weekly wrestling show, which at least at the beginning would probably prove to be too much for Heyman and the current crew to handle, although with time and added help it could become a reality.

If — and all of this is a big if — ECW replaced WWF on Monday nights, what would that mean for WCW? It seems clear that ECW wouldn't win a ratings war the first week, and perhaps not for a long time. Some would make the comparison to the debut of Nitro, which beat Raw within just a few weeks, but the difference is that Nitro was not only a fresh new show, but also a show featuring big-name wrestlers that WWF fans were familiar with. ECW has some familiar faces, but none that could really be considered former top stars in WWF or WCW. On the other hand, ECW is already beating WCW in pay-per-view buys and is quickly moving to overtake them in house show numbers. A head-to-head WCW/ECW war could be the best thing possible for both companies.

It is important to remember that much of what I have just written is pure speculation, and the truth is that right now WWF is still on USA and ECW is still on TNN. However, indications are strong that within the next month, huge changes are going to be made in the WWF, and those changes have the potential to turn the entire wrestling industry upside-down.

Rock may testify in murder case

Rock, real name Dwayne Douglas Johnson, may be forced to testify during the trial of a 12-year-old Florida boy accused of killing a 6-year-old playmate with wrestling moves. As of press time, Rock's attorneys are fighting the subpoena.

An article in the Ft. Lauderdale Sun-Sentinel reads in part: "Attorneys for Lionel Tate, the 12-year-old, say professional wrestling was responsible for the death. They say Tate was an avid fan, and he was only imitating moves he'd seen on television and in commercials when he body-slammed 6-year-old Tiffany Eunick to death last year. Eunick suffered a fractured skull and a severely lacerated liver, among other injuries. Jim Lewis, Tate's attorney, says he wants Johnson to testify in the case to explain to jurors how wrestlers are trained to make violent wrestling moves look real, and portray wrestlers beating each other then getting up and walking away without any injuries. The WWF has retained a Pittsburgh attorney to fight the subpoena. Lewis agreed to release Johnson from an order to appear for a deposition scheduled for Thursday, March 9 so Johnson's attorney can have time to schedule a hearing on whether or not Johnson must testify. Johnson can protest the subpoena on the grounds his testimony is not relevant to the case. A judge will decide the issue."

Rock was chosen to testify since he's a pro-wrestler who lives in the area. The case has taken several strange twists. The prosecution originally contended that a television commercial featuring Sting beating up a young boy in his living room was responsible for Tate's actions. Recently, they dropped all references to the WCW commercial and began focusing entirely on WWF programming. L. Brent Bozell, whose Parent's Television Council has been monitoring the Smackdown show since day one, reported in his syndicated newspaper column that the prosecution is now claiming that Eunick's head was crushed and her brain damaged by something that was "extremely consistent with the Stone Cold Stunner move". I am in no way trying to make light of this situation, but the term "extremely consistent" indicates that there have been a rash of injuries resulting from people applying Stone Cold Stunners in shoot situations, which is completely ridiculous.

In another strange twist, courtroom documents filed last week reveal that Tate told psychologists Michael Brannon and Sherrie Bourg Carter that he knew wrestling was "fake" and that "he knew the wrestlers could not keep fighting if they really jumped on top of each other from the top rope of the ring." Tate also "explained some of the ways that the wrestlers make the moves look real." Tate explained to the psychologists that he had watched a documentary on wrestling that "revealed the secrets of how the wrestlers do their moves without hurting each other." The Sun-Sentinel continues: "Brannon wrote that when he told Tate that he thought the wrestling moves were real, Tate smiled and said the pro wrestling matches were staged and the participants were not really hurting each other."

Tate's revelation that he knew it was "fake" all along defeats the purpose of Rock's testimony and his explanation of how wrestlers stage matches. It also suggests that Tate was not mimicking pro-wrestlers, since he appears to have at least a basic understanding of the concept of protecting the person you're working with. I am in no way trying to defend Tate's actions,

since it takes a horribly depraved individual to beat someone to death, but am merely suggesting that the catalyst for Tate's violence may lie somewhere other than the television set.

This case has drawn a good deal of national publicity and may become a bigger story in the next few weeks. Bozell went on to state in his column that Eunick's family will probably be filing a lawsuit against the WWF within the next few months.

New Jack almost kills himself at PPV

This sounds morbid, and it's absolutely not meant to be a joke, but someone is going to die soon due to injuries resulting from some crazy stunt. New Jack was very lucky to be alive following a stunt gone awry at the ECW pay-per-view on Sunday.

Following the Balls Mahoney vs. Kintaru Kanemura match, the Baldies ran in and attacked Balls. They put Balls on a table in the aisle and Vic Grimes hit him with a flip senton off the post. Grimes barely touched Balls and ended up splatting on his ass on the cement. I thought he at least broke a tailbone, but he was back up almost immediately. New Jack then ran out to make the save. Somewhere in here, Balls disappeared. It was your typical New Jack carnage with Angel doing this trademarked business-exposing overselling. Grimes ran in and gigged Jack with a pizza cutter. They brawled into the crowd for what seemed like weeks. Grimes finally set up two tables under a scaffold-like structure which appeared to be about 15 feet in the air. They climbed up there and looked at each other. The floor of the scaffold consisted of about four thin bars criss-crossing each other, which meant Jack and Grimes had to hold onto each other for balance lest they fall through one of the large cracks to their doom. This looked so dangerous. Probably because it was. Both guys just stood there for what seemed like forever, and the drama was not if one of them was going to fall, but who it was going to be and whether or not they would live to tell about it. After a long, scary pause, both guys just grabbed onto each other and jumped. Jack, who was actually not supposed to take a bump at all, jumped straight down and landed feet first on the top table, which broke. Grimes ended up doing what appeared to be a flip senton off the scaffold. Grimes missed both tables altogether **AND LANDED ON THE CEMENT ON NEW JACK'S HEAD**. I was sure someone died legit. Seriously. Grimes, who is one super tough bastard, managed to get to his feet and make it to the ring. Jack was not so lucky. They cut away to an ECW Events Schedule segment as EMTs rushed to check on his condition. Afterwards, Styles continued to hype up the show, although Cyrus looked visibly upset and was obviously concerned that someone had been hurt badly.

New Jack was taken away in an ambulance and hospitalized that night. As it turned out, he was more or less fine, which should almost be considered a miracle. He suffered a mild concussion, an external bruise of his shoulder and chest, a bruised sternum and a re-aggravation of a previously cracked elbow.

Part of the danger of this stunt, besides the tendency for wrestlers to constantly try to one-up each other with dangerous moves, lay in the fact that Grimes and Jack didn't climb up onto the scaffold before the show to see what they could do. Instead, they saw it, decided to do a stunt

off it, and went backstage. Once they got up there live on PPV, they realized there wasn't much they'd be able to do.

After seeing Hell in the Cell, this botched stunt and the Mae Young bump off the stage on Raw the next night, it's clear that wrestlers are not going to suddenly stop taking bigger and bigger risks. The Young bump in particular, coming one day after Jack was almost killed, shows that absolutely no lessons were learned. Most of these stunts are set up in such a way that they're generally pretty safe, but things can very easily go awry. What if Foley had landed half on the big cushion and half on the hard floor of the ring at Hell in the Cell? He'd have broken his back. What if Mae Young had leaned back too far and slammed her head into the cement? She could have died. Unless something changes, which doesn't look likely right now, there is going to be another tragedy in this sport very soon. And the saddest part is that the people more or less responsible for it are going to act like they didn't see it coming.

Because of concern over Jack's health, the final two matches were rushed and the show went off the air at just 10:20 EST.

The PPV opened with a long, rambling promo by That Guy, talking about sin.

Joey Styles and Joel Gertner introduced the pay-per-view from mid-ring. Gertner did his thing, but was interrupted by Cyrus. Cyrus told Gertner to hit the bricks since he was replacing him on commentary. Gertner stood his ground, saying this was an ECW PPV production and not a TNN television program, meaning Cyrus had no authority. Gertner said he was keeping his commentary job. Cyrus challenged him to a fight. Gertner began taking off his neckbrace and Cyrus backed down. As Gertner celebrated his "victory", Cyrus nailed him with a superkick from behind. Joey tried to pull Cyrus off Gertner as they went to the opening montage. This was a great segment with strong heat. Cyrus may have been the star of this show.

When they came back, Steve Corino was in the ring with Jack Victory. Shortly thereafter, Joey and Cyrus, who were in the midst of a brawl just moments earlier, were together doing commentary. Corino cut a long promo before noticing Sandman's wife, Lori Fullington, sitting in the crowd. Corino called her a slut and said she'd goofed around with every guy in the back except him. He told Sandman's son Tyler to shut up because Sandman wasn't even his real dad. Ironically, the original storyline with Raven, Lori and Tyler almost kept ECW off PPV. Corino called Lori a whore and she slapped him. He dragged her into the ring and basically threatened to rape her on national TV, but Sandman ran in to make the save. It literally took him forever to get there, but at least he didn't play his theme music all the way through before saving his wife. Rhino hit the ring, destroyed Sandman, and then GORED LORI TO DEATH THROUGH A TABLE. They showed this bump from the side and it looked just plain brutal. Security ran in to separate everyone, although nobody but Sandman bothered to see if Lori was OK. That's nice. Sandman then picked her up like a caveman and carelessly dragged her away. This was an example of where a stretcher was really needed, because Lori took a hella believable bump through that table.

1. Dusty Rhodes d. Steve Corino in a bullrope match. Dusty took over early and Corino got busted open. They brawled into the crowd and Corino took over. Dusty started bleeding after a cowbell shot to the head. Nothing like double juice and a brawl through the crowd in the opener. Crowd began to die as Dusty just lounged around doing absolutely nothing charismatic. Styles warned that the match was only going to get worse. A second bell ended up in the ring and Dusty taped it to the top of Corino's head. He hit the bell with a chairshot and then pinned Corino with his PHAT ELBOW. Dusty did almost literally nothing in this match. So much for using the old legends to elevate the younger stars. 1/4*

Styles gave us an update on Lori. He said she was on the way to the hospital along with Sandman. Cyrus said Sandman went with her and thus had to forfeit his TV Title Tournament match against Rhino. At least Sandman didn't get drunk and drive the ambulance like he did that one time on PPV.

Sal E. Graziano cut a promo with Little Guido backstage. He did an OK job on the mic. He said Guido's bout would be an "Italian Death Match".

2. CW Anderson & Bill Wiles d. Danny Doring & Roadkill. Doring, who DESPERATELY needs new gear, ran wild with his trademarked ghetto offense as Styles rambled off various confusing and incomprehensible names. I tell you, if anybody ever calls a "Lancaster Lariat of Lust" or a "Bare Back" or a "Wham Bam Thank You Ma'am" during one of my matches, I will kick them right in the nuts. I felt better when Anderson bent Doring over so to speak with a swank exploder, and then turned him into a human post-hole digger with a backdrop driver. Crowd wasn't into any of the nearfalls. Finish saw Roadkill go up top for — let me guess — an "Amish Splash" when Electra jumped up and shoved him off. Anderson then hit Doring with a spinebuster for the "upset". Electra left with the new Dangerous Alliance. There were so many things about this match that I hated. *

Impact Players cut a promo. I guess it was a little better, although Credible needs to get rid of the exaggerated arm movements when he speaks.

Simon Diamond and Kid Kash came out, presumably to have a match. Mike Awesome hit the ring and said both guys could either leave and live, or stay and die. Diamond left. Kash died.

3. Mike Awesome d. Kid Kash to retain the ECW Heavyweight Title. Kash got in some minor offense including a springboard dive over the guardrail into the third row. But all was for naught as Awesome dragged him into the ring, pummeled him nearly to the point of extinction, and then decimated him with a top rope super powerbomb through a table. Kash bumped like a mofo and this was good while it lasted. **3/4

Jazz ran out after the match to help Kash, but Gedo and Jado decided to attack her. Nova and Chetti made the save.

4. Nova & Chris Chetti d. Gedo & Jado. I can now say with a fair amount of certainty that Lance Storm and Justin Credible were almost single-handedly responsible for the kick-ass match on the TNN show last Friday, because this was pretty shitty. They missed some spots early. Chetti has put on a lot of weight recently and his cheesy outfit didn't do him any favors. Nova, who recently cut a promo violently alleging that he was not a comic book character, came to the ring dressed up as Venom, who is a comic book character. I guess that's better than the Green Lantern costume that he wore last time. Match picked up a bit near the end, although it seemed like there were ten different superkicks in this match alone, which brought the total superkick tally on this show to about twenty. Joey continued to spew out fanciful and outlandish names for various maneuvers. Nova and Chetti won. Another match with a lot to hate. The problem is that these guys go in there with a half million spots choreographed, and it comes off as a total clusterfuck with none of them meaning a damn thing. Seriously, thirty seconds after this match ended I couldn't remember one single spot except for the superkicks, which is pretty bad since they had non-stop spots the whole match. 3/4*

Dangerous Alliance and Electra cut a promo backstage. She talked forever. I couldn't figure out if this was a good heel promo or if she was just the most annoying woman in the world.

5. Super Crazy d. Little Guido. I thought this was the best match on the show. Crazy did a top rope Asai over the guardrail into the first row. Guido juiced. Crazy hit an awesome tornado DDT in the ring, but Big Sal ran in. Guido tried to dive off Sal's shoulders but put himself through a table on accident. Crazy hit Sal with a scary frankensteiner and then got the pin after hitting Guido with a powerbomb and a brainbuster on the broken table. Good stuff. ***1/4

6. Balls Mahoney squashed Kintaru Kanemura. This match was totally rushed and they were doing highspots literally within ten seconds. Balls won with a Michinoku Driver onto a chair. 1/4*

The New Jack injury occurred here.

7. Impact Players d. Mike Awesome & Raven and Tommy Dreamer & Masato Tanaka to win the ECW World Tag Team Titles. This was an elimination-style match although that was never really made clear. I realize that the rules for ECW three-ways may always be the same, but fans also watch WWF and WCW and are easily confused by changes. Lots of action early although it appeared really rushed. Francine came out with Raven but never even appeared on screen once. In other words, no catfight this week. Fans weren't happy about that. Tanaka pinned Awesome out of nowhere with a rolling elbow, which was a big surprise. There was shockingly little reaction for the pinfall. Raven and Awesome quickly disappeared. It seemed like the crowd couldn't even believe what they'd just seen, kind of like when Awesome pinned Tazz in the three-way last year. This turned into a pretty good match. Impact Players won with a stuff piledriver on Tommy. **1/2

Cyrus hit the ring afterwards to celebrate with the bad guys. He cut a promo about how happy he was, and said he was going to sit ringside to watch Rhino win the TV Title. Rhino came out and Cyrus started praising him like crazy. Suddenly, Paul Heyman appeared in the aisle and

totally went off on a profanity-laced tirade directed at Cyrus and TNN. In light of the recent real-life TV developments, this was probably very therapeutic for Paul. He said he wanted to kick Cyrus' ass. Gertner then came out and said Paul had a show to run. He said he'd take care of this whole TNN problem, and sent Super Crazy down to the ring.

8. Super Crazy d. Rhino to win the vacant ECW TV Title. In the middle of this match, "WE WANT SANDMAN!" chants started. Rhino destroyed Crazy for a long time. In hindsight, the way this thing had been built up, it seems totally obvious that Rhino was going to be doing the job in the end. That's a credit to Heyman since the build-up was such that I thought for sure that Rhino was getting the belt. The referee took a bump, which makes no sense on a show where guys have been running in right in front of the referee all night long. Tajiri ran in and sprayed mist at Crazy. Tajiri and Rhino destroyed him until Rob Van Dam hobbled down to the ring with Scotty Riggs, who the announcers were very careful to just call "Scotty". Van Dam hit Rhino with a crutch and then gave him a back suplex through a table. Crazy hit a moonsault off the top and the referee woke up to count the pin. The heels destroyed the good guys after the match and Van Dam took quite a bit of punishment for a guy with a broken leg. And yes, it really is broken. Anyway, Sandman finally appeared to make the save. The show ended with the good guys all celebrating and drinking beer together in mid-ring. *1/2

Ratings

I'd say there was nothing new in the ratings story this week, but that would be a lie. There was something new, and that was record-low ratings for both Nitro and Thunder. Actually, when I think about it, that's nothing new either.

Raw scored a 6.30 rating off hourly numbers of 6.14 and 6.43. Nitro scored a record-low 2.51 rating off hourly numbers of 2.90 and 2.21. So head-to-head it was 6.14 to 2.21. Totally pathetic to see the unopposed first hour of Nitro not even breaking a 3.0. Walker: Texas Ranger scored a 3.0 and beat the first unopposed hour of Nitro again. Parts of the Hulk Hogan main event drew a putrid 1.9 rating. The Raw main event drew a 6.4 with the Vince return hitting a 7.2. A 6.4 for Rock vs. Show is further proof that nobody believed Rock's career could really end.

Other ratings saw Smackdown draw a 4.5, ECW on TNN draw a 1.10, and Thunder draw a 1.9, the lowest unopposed rating in the show's history. Horrible news for WCW leading into Uncensored.

Special Thanks

I would like to thank the following individuals for their help in putting Figure Four Weekly together: Gladys Gibson, Carlos and Valerie Alvarez, Dave Meltzer, Alex Marvez, Craig Proper, Brent Kremen, Mike Rodgers, Tadashi Tanaka, Natina Schulz, Koji Yamamoto, Peter Stein, Mike Lorefice, Carlos Loera, John Courville, Brian Schenk, Bruce Mitchell, Mike Mooneyham, Bob Barnett, Georgiann Makropoulos, Scott Alessi, Paul Nemer, Prince Fontenot, Ben Cragg, Jonathan Browning, Darren Fleming, Craig Hansen, Court Bauer, Fred Cook, David Leavitt.

WWF News and Notes

- As of press time, there are no plans to have Steve Austin make an appearance at WrestleMania. There is a good chance he'd be in good enough shape to do a run-in, and perhaps a Stunner, but WWF doesn't want to risk putting him on TV unless he's close to fully-healed. They probably realize what a mistake it was to have aired footage of him in his neckbrace looking frail during Halftime Heat. You could argue that this is a swerve by the WWF to allow for a surprise appearance by Austin at the show, but he is the type of guy you'd want to hype up as a special guest to try to earn some extra buys.
- Forbes magazine had a snippet on Rock's career last week and noted that he made \$3 million in 1999.
- WWFE's lawsuit with Warrior was settled last week, although the terms of the settlement are confidential. All I know is that the case was settled early, which means it was not likely a favorable decision for the WWF, and that the quarterly report released last week noted that the trial was over and the outcome did not affect WWF finances to a major degree, which also indicates they lost some money. Warrior, on his website, issued a very long-winded rant against Hulk Hogan, so something in the trial involving Hogan must have really pissed him off.
- Vince is backing down in regards to Beyond the Mat as he told Mick Foley last week that he could appear on Larry King Live March 16th to talk about the film. The line-up as of press time for that show is now Foley, Blaustein, Terry Funk, Ric Flair, Hulk Hogan and Roddy Piper, which has all the makings of a total disaster.
- WWF is saying they sold out King of the Ring in four-and-a-half minutes. I've gotten several e-mails from people who bought tickets and said this is totally not true.
- Billy Gunn's rotator cuff surgery was a success and he's at home now with his arm in traction. He's expected out at least six months, although I have a few friends who have torn their rotator cuff and were out closer to a year.
- Saturn on his website last week apologized for his recent anti-Hogan comments. Saturn said it was childish to post what he did. He said if Hogan really was just working a program with Kidman (which almost nobody in their right mind believes is the case) than he should begin the program quickly. I wouldn't hold my breath. Chris Jericho was the latest to suggest Hogan retire, although he was a little more polite in his website commentary.
- The MCI Center sold out in a half hour for the Backlash PPV airing April 30.
- Beyond the Mat ads continue to air in localized markets during WWF programming. The movie opens nationwide March 17th.

- Vince is scheduled to meet with Bruce Hart about various business dealings, which makes the timing of Bruce's column about Bret and Bulldog suddenly less coincidental.

- Kevin Kelly and Tom Pritchard on Byte This last week said that Bob Backlund's pairing with Kurt Angle could help him get elected. They really said this. Rikishi was the guest and talked about his recent success. He said he wasn't going to let it go to his head because he hadn't had much success in the past and it was very humbling. He said he was poor as a kid and used to go down to the pier and dance for money. He said the scar on his stomach was from a drive-by shooting twelve years ago. He said he started wrestling at 16 and is 33 now. He said Rodney Anoia (Yokozuna), is running a wrestling school in Las Vegas and he talks to him fairly regularly about ideas. Phatu said he represented all fat guys. He said he was going to be getting some merchandise soon for the first time in his career and would also be on the cover of Raw magazine soon. He talked about the Gary Albright Memorial show before leaving.

WWF On Television

WWF Smackdown (March 2 — Taped February 29): Michael Cole opened the show claiming he could feel the "winds of war blowing"... HHH and Stephanie came out. Shane and Show interrupted them. Crowd initially popped for "No Chance In Hell" expecting Vince again. God, is that pop going to be huge when Vince finally shows up. How sickening. Everyone bantered back and forth for a long time saying pretty much nothing. Show signed Kane vs. X-Pac & Road Dogg in a handicap match. Shane signed Rikishi vs. Hunter & Show. Hunter signed Rock vs. Benoit & Saturn. Stephanie said she had something special for Rock, but she'd reveal it later. Everyone shook hands and left... Clips aired of the Posse trying to beat up Crash in a laundromat, but he escaped again when they couldn't co-exist... Rock d. Benoit & Saturn clean in the first handicap match. I felt like I was watching WCW. After the match, Malenko and Eddy came down and stomped a mudhole in Rock, allowing Benoit to hit him with the diving headbutt. Saturn did the job here and Benoit finished strong, so they're still protecting him. Regardless, this booking disturbed me... Steph came out and signed Rock vs. Dudleys in a table match for later... Essa Rios d. Christian—DQ when Edge speared Lita after she interfered. Edge and Christian got into a big argument afterwards. I'm still not high on Rios... Kurt Angle explained the meaning of "Intercontinental" to an event staff member backstage who appeared bored... Tazz d. Angle—DQ. Tazz had the katahajime on, but Bob Backlund ran in. Jericho made the save for Tazz. This was good while it lasted, although it only lasted about two minutes... X-Pac & Road Dogg d. Kane. This match totally bored me to the point of anger until the finish. Ref took a bump and Kane went to tombstone Tori. X-Pac made the save and then gave Kane an X-Factor on a chair for the pin... Mae Young cut a promo wearing a neckbrace. She appeared surly. Mark Henry, who was weeping, said someone was going to be seriously hurt soon... Steve Blackman d. Jeff Hardy with the top rope Kick of Fear. The wrong man won this match. Jeff almost literally killed himself dragging a decent match out of Blackman, including taking a backdrop off the dasher boards to the floor at one point. Not that I condone such behavior... Dudleys d. Rock in a pretty darn good table match. Rock put Bubba through a table first, but since it was a handicap match he had to put D-Von through one as well in order to win. Unfortunately for the People, Rock ate the 3D through a table and lost... Jackie beat Ivory to retain the Women's Title in a

hideous match... Crash NC Prince Albert when the Posse ran in. Yawn... DX beat up Too Cool backstage so they couldn't interfere in the main event... HHH & Show d. Rikishi when Hunter pinned him with a Pedigree. Show and HHH teased dissension at one point but got back together. Rock ran in afterwards to make the save but they beat him up and attacked his ribs with a lead pipe. WWF edited in this *clink* noise whenever Rock got hit with the pipe. Apparently, Rock is made of some sort of metal, because if I hit someone in the flesh with a pipe I don't think it would go *clink*. Not that I would ever hit anyone with a pipe. Pretty sub-par effort overall.

Raw is War (March 13 — Live): Hunter and Stephanie came down to the ring. Shane and Show interrupted them. The crowd popped for Shane's music again, expecting Vince. Show looked greatly trimmed down this week. Shane made fun of Rock and showed clips of him getting beaten up. All four joked around for awhile. This formula is getting so old and tired. Steph signed Rock vs. Twin Towers at WrestleMania. The Twin Towers came out to the worst circus music ever. They were two midgets. Rock finally came out on the ramp looking irate. He said he didn't mind getting beaten up, but he did mind being embarrassed and humiliated. Rock suggested a match with Show in the main event. Rock said if he won, he got to go to WrestleMania, but if he lost, fans would never see him again. Nobody believed this. Shane said OK, as long as Rock could pin Show or make him quit. Rock said there would be no interference in the match or he automatically won. Show looked concerned, but Hunter said OK... Hardy d. Al Snow & Steve Blackman. Lots of missed spots, including the finish. Al was supposed to eat a dive by Matt, but he was totally out of position and Matt just splatted on the canvas. The called an audible and Matt got the pin with a small package. Hardys have been off lately, although the finish was all Blackman's fault... Mark told Moolah and Mae Young to wait backstage while he took care of the Dudleys. Mae was in a wheelchair selling her beating from the week before... Dudleys NC Mark Henry. During the match, Bubba went backstage and kidnapped Mae. Moolah was in the bathroom or something. Mae was screaming in terror but nobody would help her, not even the camera man. Bubba wheeled her to ringside, which distracted Mark. Dudleys killed him with a really scary 3D. Bubba gave Mae the belts and then wheeled her up the ramp. He pointed to a table down below and the crowd cheered wildly, wanting to see 76-year-old Mae take the big plunge. Kiss my ass you fucked up goofs. Bubba, who is always for the People, proceeded to pick up Mae and BUBBA BOMB HER STRAIGHT TO HELL OFF THE RAMP THROUGH A TABLE TO THE CEMENT FLOOR. I almost pissed my pants for real this time. Seriously, I absolutely could not even believe this happened and I thought she was dead FOR REAL. EMTs came out and stretchered Mae off. OK, this has got to stop before she dies for real and everyone in the WWF goes off about how shocked they were that she was killed doing a stunt... Kurt Angle d. Chris Jericho & Tazz in a no-DQ three-way to retain the UK and IC Titles. This was a really good match. Backlund ran in at one point and Tazz put him in the katahajime to a HUGE pop. Chyna took care of Backlund and then Angle hit Jericho with a belt for the pinfall. Good stuff... HHH & X-Pac & Road Dogg d. Too Cool & Rikishi when X-Pac NAILED Rikishi with the ring bell. Pretty good match. Scotty did the worm, but not the chop, and the crowd booed... Kane d. Bossman. This was OK, I guess, but too long for TV. Bossman looks totally out of place in the year 2000... Cole interviewed Moolah, who ran down Mae. She said "the bitch got what she deserved". That wasn't very nice... Dean Malenko d.

Essa Rios to win the WWF Light Heavyweight Title. WHOO-HOO! Lita tried to give Eddy a powerbomb off the steps but he caught her and absolutely DRILLED HER into the floor with one of the stiffest powerbombs you will ever see in your life. Malenko did about as good a job as possible with Rios, but there was no heat at all... Acolytes d. Edge & Christian. Terri distracted Christian allowing Edge to get pinned. More dissension... They showed clips of the Posse attacking Crash in the Newark airport. Pete Gas managed to get the pin. Somehow, the Posse's ring music played in the airport. Crash then immediately pinned Pete to win the belt back. So Pete Gas is now a former Hardcore Champion. WWF TOTALLY dropped the ball by not having the title change occur live so Ross could go: "PETE GAS! PETE GAS! PETE GAS!"... Benoit & Saturn d. Edge & Val Venis. Not bad although Saturn had to sell a kick from Test that missed by a mile... Shane came out and said he'd referee the main event. Lots of heat for that. Rock and Big Show wrestled to surprisingly little heat considering Rock's career was supposedly on the line. Shane eventually took a bump. Rock hit the Rock Bottom and the People's Elbow and made the cover. Earl Hebner ran out, but Shane pulled him out of the ring at the two-count. Shane hit Rock with a chair and laid him out. Suddenly, they cut to backstage where a limo arrived. Vince got out looking cross. Crowd popped like mad. Apparently, Vince's limo has a TV that gets the USA Network, which is how he became aware of these shenanigans. They cut to clips of Shane, Hunter and Stephanie with their mouths open in total shock. It was like the kids threw a big-ass party and dad came home early. Hunter ran to have a word with Vince but Vince punched him out. Vince finally came through the curtain and the crowd went apeshit. He power-walked down to the ring, punched out Shane, and put his referee shirt on. Rock hit the Rock Bottom and Vince made the dramatic three-count as the crowd chanted along. CRAZEE pop for the pinfall. So the Rock is going to WrestleMania, which was a shocker to, well, nobody. Still, one of the all-time great Raw moments.

WWF On Tour

Indianapolis, IN (March 8): Godfather d. Midian, Bradshaw d. Prince Albert, Too Cool d. Headbangers, Blackman d. Christian, Rikishi d. Big Bossman, Esse Rios d. Christian, Dudleys d. Hardy, Kurt Angle d. Edge, Rock & Kane d. Big Show & HHH.

Albany, NY (March 9): Godfather d. Steve Blackman, Saturn & Dean Malenko d. Too Cool, Kurt Angle d. Tazz, Acolytes d. Big Bossman & Prince Albert, Phatu d. Viscera, Essa Rios d. Crash Holly to retain the Light Heavyweight Title, Dudleys d. Edge & Christian and Hardy in a three-way, Road Dogg d. Test, Rock & Kane d. HHH & X-Pac.

WCW News and Notes

- There is talk that Bret Hart's career might be over. When Bret cut his promo in Germany a few weeks ago, he indicated that his career was nowhere near finished. However, the promo he cut this past weekend in England was said to seem pretty final. Although fans in both cities said his interview was far and away the best thing on the show, those who contacted us said it was also very sad because Bret gave indications that they may not be seeing him in action again. Bret's concussion is said to still be very bad. Friends are now saying that he might have had a

concussion going into his match with Goldberg at Starrcade. During that match, he took a super stiff kick to the jaw and also hit his head hard on the floor when Goldberg didn't hold onto him during the figure four spot around the post. Bret then went on TV, took a stiff powerbomb from Sid on Monday, and then took some chairshots to the head from Funk on Tuesday. The cumulative damage may have been far worse than one bad concussion. If he makes a return, it probably won't be for a long time.

- Chris Candido and Tammy Sytch were backstage at Nitro Monday, but not used. There was a legal hassle last week as the ECW release papers included a clause stating ECW had the right to use them for one appearance per year, and they apparently didn't realize this when they signed. WCW read the release papers and freaked out, not wanting to give them a big push all year and then have them appear on an ECW PPV and put someone over. For a short period, the thought was that WCW wasn't going to use them at all and they were up the creek. By the end of the week, the ECW appearance clause had been removed, and sources indicate WCW had to pay Heyman a fee to have him remove it. That should teach every one of you wrestlers reading this to hire an attorney to look over your contracts so you don't get bitten in the ass.

- Standards and Practices clamped down on Terry Funk's chicken last week. This is absolutely a true story. They said the chicken could in no way be dismembered. Where is Vince Russo to claim this killed the quarter hour rating for that segment?

- The original plan was for Vampiro to win the US Title from Jeff Jarrett at Thunder, but those plans got changed at the last minute. Originally, Sid was going to interfere in the main event and help Vamp beat Jarrett. That had to be changed when Sid called and said he couldn't make it to Thunder because there had been a death in the family. At that point, WCW decided to wait a while and keep Jarrett strong going into the pay-per-view. Vamp has been promised the belt somewhere down the line, for whatever that's worth.

- Tiny Lister, the former Zeus, was on BET last week and proclaimed himself the biggest star in wrestling history.

- Goldberg was presented with a booking plan for his return last week. The plans called for him to return in April and headline against Jeff Jarrett at Spring Stampede, building towards an eventual title match with Sid this summer. Goldberg apparently wasn't too hot on these plans.

- Dallas Page's back is still really screwed up and there is no real word on when he'll be back in action.

- The article about Hulk Hogan's face appearing on a church wall was posted on several Internet sites last week as a true story.

- The Bif Naked video starring Kanyon, Sting, Crowbar, Lash Laroux, Kid Romeo, Jamie Jackson and Le Artiste is for a remake of the song "We're Not Gonna Take It" by Twisted Sister. The song will be in the Ready To Rumble movie, so they used footage from the film and

additional stuff taped last Friday and Saturday. The video debuts next weekend on MTV Total Request Live. Ready to Rumble was screened last week for a bunch of guys in WCW, and they all liked it, which could be good news or bad news.

- Brian Adams and Wrath are expected back as a tag team next month.
- They had a contest on the nationally syndicated Don & Mike radio show last week giving away free tickets to Thunder at the Patriot Center in Washington DC. Don and Mike said that caller 100 would get the tickets. Well, caller 100 decided he didn't want them. So they said caller 101 would get them. That caller didn't want them either. So they said caller 102 could get them. Caller 102 wasn't interested. Caller 103 finally decided he'd take the tickets. In WCW's defense, this was a nationally syndicated show, so there is the possibility that callers 100, 101 and 102 weren't from the Washington, DC area.
- Buff Bagwell appeared in the UK for the recent tour, but didn't wrestle. He's still complaining of a knee injury and said he had fluid drained recently. Sid and Jeff Jarrett both missed the shows. Jarrett's excuse was that someone had broken into his car recently and stolen everything, including his passport. I guess he got a new one because he managed to make it to the London show. Sid's excuse was that he wasn't allowed back into the country due to a very highly publicized situation several years ago where he and Arn Anderson almost literally stabbed each other to death in a real-life hotel altercation. The problem with this story is that Sid traveled to England as WWF Champion in 1996, which was almost five years after the stabbing incident took place.

WCW On Television

Wednesday Thunder (March 8 — Taped March 7): Juventud Guerrera and Psicosis came down to ringside. Juvie said he was going to do commentary on the show, but for the first time maybe in his life, Mike Tenay stood his ground. Tenay said someone else was going to be doing commentary. Rey Misterio Jr. came out to a pretty nice pop. Rey didn't say much except that he'd be back in about three months. I hope JJ was listening. Psicosis beat the Artist via DQ when Laukeia shoved down the referee. Match was pretty good until the crappy finish... Bam Bam Bigelow arrived with Daphne, David and Crowbar. The latter two were wearing neckbraces selling their beating at the hands of Wall... Demon beat Idol. Really. You know your career is on the rise when you're asked to job to Demon. First, Demon got stuck in his casket, which was a rib this time. Idol and Lane came out trying so hard to appear straight that they appeared gayer than ever. Miss Hancock came out and kissed Idol leading to the finish. Bad guys destroyed Demon after, but Norman Smiley made the save, which makes no sense since they were feuding just a few weeks ago... Bigelow came out and called David and company down to the ring. Bobby was "surprised they're alive". They hobbled to the ring displaying the most business-exposing overselling in months. They sat down in chairs in mid-ring. Bigelow said this was all his fault because he trained Wall. Well, someone has to take the blame. Wall came out and attacked Bigelow. David and Crowbar continued to sit in their chairs as if nothing out of the ordinary was occurring right before their very eyes. Wall then kicked them in the head, removed

their neckbraces, and beat them thoroughly. EMTs had to come out and stretcher them away again. Nobody cared or believed they were really hurt... Another Hogan comedy promo aired... Maestro came out to Classical music. I thought the angle was that he had to only listen to rap now? Maestro is actually more embarrassing than Hogan if that's possible. Shat beat Maestro in a total disaster. At one point, Miller had to sell that he couldn't win a tug-of-war with Symphony... Dustin Rhodes beat Lash Laroux rather quickly. Not bad while it lasted. Terry Funk ran in and beat up Dustin with his chicken afterwards. KFC must be sponsoring Uncensored. Watching these two takes shots to the head with a deceased chicken was harder to forgive this time, although there was a funny spot where Dustin actually ducked a swing but got hit on the rebound... Flair and Luger came out for the greatest segment maybe ever on this show. Flair called out Arn and asked him to join Team Package. Arn cut this fabulous promo saying Flair was a horrible dad and that Luger was just a jerk who cared only about himself. My poor review cannot do this interview justice. Flair said he'd raised four kids and wanted to ride fast again, and that the last time he slowed down the company kicked him in the ass. I wonder which time he's talking about? Arn refused to join. Luger, who was so damn out of his league here, yelled at Flair for not getting the job done. He said one more strike and Flair was out, adding that they had until Monday to get this situation solved. Flair and particularly Arn were so beyond awesome here that they made everyone else in this business look like total goofs in comparison... Finley NC Meng when Tank ran in. Yawn... Mamalukes d. Harlem Eat and Harris Twins and Booker & Kidman in a four-way elimination match. Pig T at least looks like he's losing weight. Booker pinned Stevie for the first fall. The second fall, which saw Booker & Kidman get eliminated, took place during a commercial break. Really. Mamalukes finally got the win after Disco hit one of the Twins behind the referee's back. This actually turned into a decent match. Disco took an H-Bomb afterwards... Stevie cut a horrible promo backstage in which he talked so fast that he appeared to begin speaking in another language. He called Torrie a "squackin' yak" whatever the hell that is... Knobs cut a horrible promo... A long Sid vs. Jeff Jarrett video package aired... By the way, they had time for all this crap but they couldn't find a way to edit in the finish of the second fall in the four-way... Jeff Jarrett d. Vampiro with the Stroke on the US belt, making this probably the sixth match in a row that Vamp has lost since his "big push" began. Lots of interference and chicanery in this match. I will say that Tenay did an awesome job of putting over Vampiro as a guy who absolutely deserved the title but got screwed. The announcers say stuff like that all the time and it's never believable, but Tenay said it in such a way that I totally believed it, if that makes any sense. Pretty bad show overall.

WCW Monday Nitro (March 13 — Live): Ric Flair came out and made fun of the People. He called out Arn and asked him to join Team Package. To make a long story short, Arn said no. Crowd was totally not into this and one dick even screamed "SHUT UP!" as Arn was talking. Arn called out Hogan. He said Hogan wasn't going to have to worry about him on Sunday because he was pulling himself out of the picture. So, of course, he's turning heel on Hogan Sunday. Hogan hit the ring and attacked Flair, but Luger made the save. Luger hit Hogan in the shoulder with a bat. Security ran in to break it up... Hogan was taken to the hospital in an ambulance selling his shoulder injury... Three Count d. Jung Dragons in a crazy TV bout. Lots of high flying including a six-man train wreck spot. Finally, a fun match on Nitro... Dandy and Silver King hit on Miss Hancock backstage. Dandy, the suave devil that he is, offered to "excite her groin". I don't

know how many women I've picked up using that line. She turned him down... Wall NC Bigelow in seconds when Wall handcuffed him to the turnbuckles. David and Crowbar foolishly came out in their neckbraces and Wall killed them. Wall chokeslammed David off the apron through Crowbar and a table. Even though Crowbar took the worst of this, the angle was that David had to be taken to the hospital and Crowbar was fine. My head was starting to hurt... Jarrett and the Harris Twins cut a promo after sending the NWO girls to the back. Twins challenged Sid and a partner to a match for later. Sid came out and rambled through a promo. He introduced his partner as Vampiro. Barely any reaction for that... Bigelow challenged Wall to a match at Uncensored. Sort of. He kept calling him "World" instead of Wall. This was really bad... They showed clips of Paul Orndorff recruiting Mr. Big Arms from the Arnold Classic. Boy did Orndorff look like a goof put into this situation... Kidman & Booker d. Lane & Idol. Actually, Idol's new name is "Rave" because a lawyer representing Billy Idol wrote to WCW and complained about the Idol name. Really. So it's now Lane & Rave. Unfortunately, the screen read "Idol & Rave" as they were coming down to the ring. This company just cannot avoid lawsuits. Miss Hancock scouted the match and said Kidman was cute. Torrie, who was at ringside and had no access to a TV set with which to hear Hancock's comments, went over and yelled at her for making those comments. WCW seems determined to do one totally illogical thing during each quarter hour. Kidman "stole" the win from Booker, who got pissed. No dancing from Hancock this week... Hogan returned to the Arena driving the ambulance appearing none the worse for wear... Hennig d. Luger—DQ in seconds when Flair ran in. Hogan, totally not selling any shoulder injury, made the save setting up Hogan & Hennig vs. Luger & Flair later... Knobs found Dog drinking out of the toilet. Horrible. Dog is the most embarrassing wrestling gimmick I've ever seen... Dog and Knobs came out for a match with Norman Smiley. Knobs couldn't get the leash off Dog for what seemed like forever. Dog then started smelling the referee. Knobs attacked Smiley. You may want to write all of this down, because it is both confusing and utterly pointless. Demon ran out and attacked Knobs. Idol and Lane, or Idol and Rave, or Rave and Lane, or whoever the hell they are this week, then ran out and attacked Demon. Somewhere in here, Norman put the Crossface on Dog for the win. Incredibly horrible... Knobs cut a promo and challenged Demon to a hardcore match. You may want to write all this down while you're at it. Terry Funk came out instead. He beat Knobs with help from Evan Karagias and Shannon Moore. Funk took several stiff unprotected chairshots to the head as Tony laughed about how "fun" this was. No, this was not fun at all. Three-Count, who helped Funk just seconds before, turned and dropkicked him out of the ring. Funk made a comeback with his chicken. Knobs, who had just finished fighting Funk, helped Funk clear the ring of Three-Count, who had helped Funk win but then beat him up. My head was throbbing at this point. Dustin then ran in and beat up Funk with a cowbell... Sid & Vampiro d. Harris Twins. Finally, Vampiro won a match... Hogan and Hennig cut a promo hyping up the main event. Hennig said the team of himself and Hogan was the greatest thing in the history of wrestling... Backstage, the Twins beat up Mamalukes. Twins were totally no-selling the beating they'd just received from Sid and Vamp... Disco came out and said the Mamalukes were going to defend the tag straps against Harlem Heat. Of course, the Mamalukes didn't come out since they were busy getting beat up by the Harris Twins backstage. Stevie killed Disco quickly. Poor Disco had to bump for Stevie, Pig T and Cassius during this short bout... Flair & Luger d. Hennig & Hogan—DQ when Hogan shoved down the referee. Yes, that really was the finish. I can't count the number of Raw main events that have

ended via DQ when a guy shoved the referee. Bad guys destroyed Hennig and Hogan afterwards until Sting made the save. Sting got a big pop, but he meant absolutely nothing in the ratings this week and he'll mean even less than that on PPV and on Nitro next week... Horrible show and WCW continues to do the exact opposite of what they need to do to turn things around.

WCW On Tour

Birmingham, England (March 10): Norman Smiley d. David Flair. Smiley pinned David and Daphne to win the match. This was said to be really long and it totally exposed Flair. Not that he hadn't been exposed in every other match he's been in recently. Bam Bam Bigelow d. Wall, Booker T d. Fit Finley in the best match on the show, Jim Duggan d. Brian Knobs to retain the TV Title. Duggan was actually chanting "USA!" during this match. Penzer introduced Bret as a five-time World Champion, thus devaluing their own title (Bret is a five-time WWF Champion and either a one or two-time WCW Champion depending on who you listen to). Mamalukes d. Harris Twins, Dustin Rhodes d. Terry Funk. Funk was said to look older than ever and totally beaten up. I remember when they first brought him in and the plan was to use him sparingly in big matches. Now he's on the road doing house shows and taking long plane flights to England. Their handling of Funk is almost a crime. Luger d. Vampiro. Nash, who had appeared on a UK TV show walking around just fine, came out in a wheelchair and told Liz to go to the back. Hennig d. Ric Flair in what was said to be a good main event, although the crowd didn't consider it a main-event calibre match so there were a lot of "Boring!" chants. In typical WCW fashion, the crowd was said to have left unhappy.

London, England (March 11): Norman Smiley d. Knobs in a bad match, Bam Bam Bigelow d. Wall. Daphne supposedly took a chokeslam in this match but I find that hard to believe. Terry Funk d. Dustin Rhodes, Jim Duggan d. Fit Finley to retain the TV Title, Mamalukes d. Harris Twins, Vampiro d. Jeff Jarrett—DQ, Booker & Curt Hennig d. Ric Flair & Lex Luger. Said to be better than the night before.

ECW News and Notes

- Lance Storm and his wife Tina are the proud parents of 8 pound, 6 ounce Rachel Anne Evers, born last week. Storm was actually given a speeding ticket on the way to the hospital, which he was understandably upset about. Best wishes to both.
- The original plan for the pay-per-view was to have Doring & Roadkill face Gedo & Jado. However, they did a run-through match the week before and it was said to be horrible, so they replaced Doring and Roadkill with Nova & Chetti.
- Spike Dudley's knee surgery will keep him out of action for nearly a year. His doctor told him it was the kind of injury usually only seen in car wreck victims. Spike originally tore it out in January and has been working on it ever since.

ECW On Television

ECW on TNN (March 10 — Taped): Gertner and Styles opened up the show. Cyrus interrupted as usual. This time, Joey got pissed and called him an asshole. Cyrus noted he was in charge and told them both to hit the bricks. After they left, he said he wanted the TV Title. Bill Alfonso came out without the belt. Cyrus went mad and said if he didn't get the belt immediately he was cancelling the show. Nobody in the crowd believed the show would actually be cancelled. You kids may be in for a surprise. Rob Van Dam finally came out on the shoulders of Scott Riggs. He yelled at Cyrus for a long time. Van Dam said he was going to vacate the title in order to save ECW from cancellation. How gallant. Fonzie then challenged Cyrus to a fight, but Rhino ran in and gored him to death. Van Dam tried to go after Rhino but security ran in and kept them apart... Rhino d. Spike Dudley in a pretty good quarterfinal match... Impact Players d. Gedo & Jado in one hell of a dope match. I've never been a huge fan of Gedo and Jado, but this match fucking RULED THE WORLD. Crowd was crazy hot for this match, particularly all the nearfalls... Raven & Mike Awesome d. Tommy Dreamer & Masato Tanaka to win the ECW World Tag Team Titles. Francine came out with Raven in a grunge-type outfit with a new makeover, and I totally didn't even recognize her. Match was good although the heat kind of died a bit near the finish. They cut away quickly after the pinfall to a shot of That Guy cutting a promo hyping up the PPV. Another really good edition of ECW on TNN.

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